

Does Anything Eat Wasps? And 101 Other Questions

By **New Scientist**

Reviewed by Michalis Hadjimarou, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Does Anything Eat Wasps? is a user-friendly, easy-to-read collection of questions and short answers that covers a wide range of science topics, from galaxies colliding in outer space to the amount of fat necessary to render a human bulletproof. These questions and their corresponding answers were published over the last 11 years in *The Last Word*, *New Scientist* magazine's weekly column of everyday science questions. Both the questions and the answers have been provided by the readers of the column.

As is clearly stated in the introduction, this book is not an attempt to solve the big mysteries of life, such as the meaning of human existence or the nature of God. Instead, it is an effort to answer the small questions of everyday life, the kind that arise while watching a bartender pour a beer or pondering the flight pattern of migrating geese. Some of these questions

are quite common and are probably shared by many people, whereas others are somewhat strange. The topics addressed in the book are from a wide range of scientific disciplines, including biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology and oceanography.

The type of answers is also broad, ranging from the strictly scientific to the simple and humorous. The latter might not provide the reader with many answers, but will at least give reason to smile or even, in some cases, have a good laugh.

Some of the topics in the book require substantial scientific knowledge and an excellent understanding of English to appreciate fully the information provided in the answers. However, in the majority of cases, the general scientific knowledge that any science teacher should possess is more than adequate. In

fact, this book would be suitable for most people with a minimal scientific knowledge.

Most certainly, this book is not something a science teacher can expect to use as a main teaching tool. However, it includes a large enough selection of useful and interesting information to provide any science teacher with the appropriate material as well as a good excuse for an exciting break during teaching. Furthermore, the book can prove an invaluable pool of truly unique ideas that a teacher can draw from to stimulate small-scale investigations by students.

Details

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Kleine botanische Experimente

By **Hilke Steinicke and Imme Meyer**

Reviewed by Friedlinde Krotscheck, Internationale Gesamthochschule Heidelberg, Germany

The book, written in German, describes a great variety of experiments using plants. The experiments are at different levels of difficulty and often explain everyday observations. The chapter titles focus on certain parts of plants and provide detailed information on plant physiology. The required materials are easy to obtain and mostly free; the equipment can be found in any household.

For any age and any level, this is a very good source of experiments for biology,

natural phenomena, physics, chemistry or biotechnology. It could be used at home, on field trips or in the classroom. Teachers are, of course, good at using materials like this to tailor worksheets.

Unfortunately, in contrast to the complete and detailed descriptions in the book, the drawings are unhelpful. Furthermore, the book would be greatly improved if the useful chapter titles were complemented with graphic information on characteristic features, such as flowers and their different shapes.

Kleine botanische Experimente addresses a very neglected area – plants as producers, as models for technical projects, and as the source of life on Earth. This book belongs in the library of every (German-speaking) school.

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